



Learning  
Disabilities  
Association  
of Michigan



**Testimony in Support of the 2023**  
Submitted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan  
for June 22, 2023

---

Thank you, Chair Rogers and members of the Health Policy Committee for this opportunity to share our support of SB 31 and HB 4200.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan (LDA-MI) is a statewide, non-profit organization of individuals with specific learning disabilities and attention disabilities, and the families and the professionals who support them. LDA-MI provides education and support to families of children with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities.

The incidence of these types of disabilities is rising every year at an alarming pace. Approximately 17% of children in the United States have a developmental disability<sup>i</sup>. The CDC now estimates that 1 in 44 children in the United States have an autism spectrum disorder<sup>ii</sup>. The National Academy of Sciences Committee on Developmental Toxicology, estimates that at least 28% of developmental defects are caused in whole or part by environmental exposures to toxic chemicals<sup>iii</sup>. **When it comes to chemicals, lead has one of the strongest links to neurological harm.** In fact, everyone agrees that there is NO SAFE LEVEL of lead exposure for children.

Exposure to lead can cause neurological damage leading to learning disabilities, lowered IQs, and behavioral problems. **Recent studies show that learning and behavior deficits occur in children even at very low levels of lead exposure, and that these deficits persist.** In addition to learning disabilities, lead exposure can cause intellectual impairment, ADHD, and behavior problems. Scientists also link low levels of lead exposure in toddlers to declines in math and reading test scores when the children reach elementary school.

This school year, just over 200,000 students received special education services in Michigan<sup>1</sup>. 25.9% of those children were identified as having a specific learning disability and thousands more have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Additionally, this data only represents children who have been diagnosed and/or are receiving support. Early intervention is vital for children with attention and behavior issues such as those caused by lead poisoning. Early intervention relies on early identification. The effects of lead poisoning are lifelong and impact a child throughout their school careers, yet school teams cannot test for lead poisoning. They can only observe the behaviors which often creates the challenge of working to differentiate between neurological or student choice. The more we can know about the causes for a child's challenges, the better we can address them in a healthy way and increase the chances for that child's success in school and in life. **Universal testing takes some of the guess work out of interpreting children's behaviors in school. Universal testing can ensure more appropriate early and long-term intervention for thousands of Michigan's children.**

---

<sup>1</sup> [MI School Data](#) Special Education Programs Data Portraits Overview, 2022-2023 School Year



Learning  
Disabilities  
Association  
of Michigan



**Michigan should lead the way to addressing exposures to lead.** SB 31 and HB 4200 are strong steps in that direction. Thank you for your consideration of these bills and please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Amy Barto, M.Ed.  
Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan  
President & Healthy Children Project Coordinator  
[tchrqueen1@gmail.com](mailto:tchrqueen1@gmail.com), (616) 901-5888

---

<sup>i</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/features/increase-in-developmental-disabilities.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>

<sup>iii</sup> Scientific Frontiers in Developmental Toxicology and Risk Assessment, Executive Summary, [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=9871&page=1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=9871&page=1), National Academy of Sciences Committee on Developmental Toxicology.